

April 15, 2025

To the Honorable Claudia Wilken,

I am writing as the parent of a current Division I student-athlete and as someone deeply concerned about the far-reaching implications of the proposed roster limits within the NCAA's amended settlement in *House v. NCAA*. My son is a preferred walk-on for the Syracuse University football team—an opportunity he has worked toward his entire young life, and one that will be unjustly taken from him if these roster limits are implemented as proposed.

Your earlier comments acknowledging the harmful consequences of imposing such limits, especially on current walk-on athletes, gave many families like mine a sense of hope. You wisely suggested a phased approach and even recommended grandfathering current walk-ons to mitigate unnecessary harm. Regrettably, it is clear that these suggestions have not been embraced in the revised proposal. The NCAA has returned with a rigid stance that leaves no room for consideration of the human cost to student-athletes already on these rosters—young people who have sacrificed and persevered without scholarships, fueled only by their love of the game and the belief that effort and determination matter.

This isn't just about my son. It is about *thousands* of student athletes across the country whose dreams will be shattered overnight—not due to performance, conduct, or merit, but due to an arbitrary administrative limit driven, it seems, more by financial interest than fairness or athlete welfare.

Walk-on athletes represent the very essence of collegiate sports. They are often overlooked, yet they are among the most dedicated, resilient, and hardworking members of their teams. To erase their opportunities in this way undermines not only their individual potential, but the spirit of equity and perseverance that college athletics is meant to foster. To take this one step further, I respectfully ask that you also consider the future student-athletes—the young children who may be only ten years old today, kicking a ball around at a local park, dreaming of one day earning their spot on a college team.

These proposed roster limits don't just close doors for current walk-ons; they quietly shut out generations of athletes yet to come. We must not forget that some of the most iconic names in sports began their careers as walk-ons—individuals who would never have had the chance to excel under a system with these proposed restrictions. Players like J.J. Watt, Clay Matthews, and Baker Mayfield were once walk-ons. So was Scottie Pippen. Without the opportunity to earn their place, their stories—and the inspiration they offer to countless others—would never have existed. This amended settlement, as it currently stands, does not serve all members of the class fairly. It appears to favor expediency and financial settlement over long-term equity and opportunity. The harm to current and future walk-ons is not theoretical—it is real, immediate, and irreversible.

The NCAA's decision to ignore your prudent recommendation to grandfather current athletes and to phase in any future limitations reveals a troubling indifference to the lives and well-being of the very students it purports to support. Their decision will cause irreparable harm to student-athletes like my son, who have earned their spot through grit and self-belief—athletes who ask for no guarantees, only the opportunity to compete.

Your Honor, I respectfully and earnestly urge you not to accept the amended settlement in its current form. If implemented as proposed, it will eliminate one of the last merit-based pathways in college sports and send a heartbreaking message to aspiring athletes everywhere: that there is no place for you if you don't come with a scholarship in hand. Walk-ons are not second-class athletes. They are the heartbeat of college sports. They prove that greatness can come from anywhere and that work ethic still matters. Please stand up for them now.

With deep respect and gratitude,

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